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TAGS: PGOV PREL ASEC HA

SUBJECT: JUDICIAL POLICE DIRECTOR DISCUSSES GANGS WITH DCM

REF: PAP 1733

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Douglas M. Griffiths, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶11. (C) Summary: Newly (re-)appointed Director General of the Judicial Police Michael Lucius summarized the Haitian National Police (HNP) response to gang-led criminality in a conversation with the DCM on July 1. Lucius accused pro-Aristide former employees of state-owned enterprises (such as Teleco) and fired Palace Guard and HNP officers for leading the violence out of political revenge. But he said many smaller gang leaders carried out crimes just to get rich. Lucius confirmed a divide at top levels of the HNP between former military and civilian police leaders and explained how Youri Latortue (who, Lucius said, submitted a back-dated resignation letter from the HNP in June) had magnified a personal dispute between Lucius and newly-promoted head of the HNP Intelligence Unit Gessy Coicou during the recent HNP management shuffle. End summary.

¶12. (C) Lucius, who led the DCPJ before from 2003 to late 2004, spoke confidently with the DCM about recent progress in the fight against kidnapping. He said Emmanuel Coriolan (aka "Dom Laj"), killed in a shootout with the HNP, had directed a great number of recent abductions. He also reported that the arrest of another major suspect, Jerry Narcius, had yielded significant intelligence. (Note: Lucius announced the arrest of 37 kidnapping suspects in a press conference June 29. End note).

¶13. (C) Lucius described a two-layered criminal network in which politically-motivated gangs sometimes worked in tandem with smaller criminal groups who simply sought riches. Local neighborhood teams -- often quite young -- commit crimes of opportunity, Lucius said, seeking quick payoff and enough income to "buy a house in Petionville." These bandits are supported by a more sophisticated network of arms suppliers and operational strategists seeking to create conditions that might lead to Aristide's return, Lucius claimed. He identified a gang leader known as "Ti DGI" as the major arms supplier for the advanced criminal network, and "CM" as the head of operations. "CM" was a former Gonaives Commissar imprisoned for the La Scierie massacre who escaped from prison February 19.

¶14. (C) Lucius also confirmed that many of the weapons used by the gangs came from Palace Guards (USGPN) dismissed after Aristide's departure as well as an ongoing flow of weapons via the HNP's anti-gang unit (SIAG). He admitted that even now there was no operational connection between the USGPN and the rest of the HNP structure. Lucius said many of the operational planners and soldiers were individuals Aristide had loaded into the HNP or the payrolls of state-owned enterprises (such as Teleco and the Port Authority) who lost their patronage positions and now created problems. They sought, he said, to replace their lost income as well as agitate for the conditions that might make a return of Aristide (and the patronage system) possible. Lucius also confirmed that some deportees were playing a role and he promised to provide specific names.

¶15. (C) Underscoring what we have heard elsewhere, Lucius confirmed a divide within HNP command between members of the former military and civilian directors. According to Lucius, this split is responsible for much of the tension at high levels of the HNP, most notably between Lucius (civilian) and State Secretary for Public Security (SSPS) David Basile (former military). Lucius described Basile's efforts to insert himself into operational planning responsibilities and assert greater personal control over the HNP. He also asserted that the camaraderie among the ex-military leaders at the top (such as Director General Leon Charles and Administrative Police (DCPA) chief Ricardo Etienne) clouded their judgment.

¶16. (C) The recent police shuffle (reftel) revealed another rift inside the HNP: between Lucius and newly appointed head of the HNP Intelligence Unit, Gessy Coicou. Coicou, who was once Lucius' assistant, is reportedly close to the Primature

and both the Prime Minister and Youri Latortue had asked Charles in a letter to appoint her as DCPJ. Lucius responded in kind by writing a letter of his own, and Charles ultimately appointed Lucius instead of Coicou. (Note: Charles told us that, despite his differences with Lucius, the latter was the only person with the courage and skill to confront the challenges of the current situation. End note). During a press statement soon thereafter, Coicou hinted that Lucius was himself a suspect in ongoing kidnapping investigations. Lucius said that Coicou had been an effective deputy to him for several years. But recently, personal jealousies combined with powerful backing from the Primature have led her to turn on him.

¶17. (C) Separately, Lucius informed the DCM that Youri Latortue had recently handed in a letter of resignation from the HNP. It was widely believed that Youri had been fired from the HNP (Presidential Security Unit) for corruption in ¶1998. Lucius said Youri had never formally left the HNP -- until now. He also said that the resignation letter had been backdated to March, 2004 in order to grant Youri the one-year separation from the HNP legally required for Senate candidates. Lucius said Youri is increasingly shifting attention towards his candidacy for Gonaives Senator.

¶18. (C) Comment: Despite continuing concerns about his possible involvement in drug-trafficking, Lucius is certainly a more effective manager than his predecessor. He is widely credited for having the courage and discipline to get something done in these demanding circumstances. His comments revealed nothing particularly new (save for Youri's resignation), but confirmed much of what we already knew about the key role played by insiders and benefactors of the old Aristide regime in supplying and coordinating much of the recent violence. End comment.

GRIFFITHS